

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DOTE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2457
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, IS
SUBJ: THE SEAMEN'S STRIKE

REF: TEL AVIV 4409

1. SUMMARY: THE SEAMEN'S STRIKE IS NOW IN ITS 12TH
WEEK AND APPARENTLY COMING TO AN END AS THE UNION HAS
ACCEDED TO THE MANAGEMENT DEMAND TO ACCEPT A NO-STRIKE
PROVISION IN THE NEW CONTRACT. RESUMPTION OF WORK IS
AWAITING THE SIGNING OF THAT CONTRACT FOR 1978-
1980. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND MANAGEMENT HAIL THEIR
STEADFAST REFUSAL TO COMPROMISE ON THIS ISSUE AS A
MODEL FOR HANDLING THE CURRENT STRIKE THREATS IN THE
PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR. END SUMMARY
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2. THE SEAMEN'S STRIKE IS CURRENTLY IN ITS 12TH WEEK, BUT A
SETTLEMENT IS EXPECTED WITHIN DAYS. BY NOW LARGELY IGNORED BY
THE PRESS AND OVERSHADOWED BY MORE DRAMATIC STRIKES OF EL AL,
THE JOURNALISTS, TEACHERS, AND VARIOUS CIVIL SERVICE GROUPS
TOUCHING THE PUBLIC MORE DIRECTLY, IT IS NEVERTHELESS CITED
BY MANAGEMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT AS A MODEL FOR DEALING WITH

UNIONS HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR PERSISTENT AND COSTLY LABOR TROUBLES, SUCH AS ARE NOW THREATENING THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

3. THE MAIN SUCCESS OF THE SHIPPING COMPANIES AND THE GOVERNMENT IS A TWO YEAR NO-STRIKE AGREEMENT REQUIRING THAT ALL INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE DISPUTES BE SUBMITTED TO ARBITRATION WITH THE HISTADRUT BEING AUTHORIZED TO REPRESENT THE WORKERS' CLAIMS. THIS AGREEMENT WAS REACHED FOLLOWING THE SALE OF TEN ISRAELI MERCHANT SHIPS AND A THREAT TO LIQUIDATE THE ENTIRE MERCHANT FLEET. IN RETURN THE SHIPPING COMPANIES HAVE AGREED TO GUARANTEE THE EMPLOYMENT OF ALL THE STRIKING SEAMEN.

4. ACCORDING TO ZIM SHIPPING COMPANY, TEN NEW SHIPS ARE ON ORDER TO BE DELIVERED WITHIN THE NEXT TWENTY MONTHS THUS ASSURING CONTINUING EMPLOYMENT FOR THE SEAMEN. ALTHOUGH ORIGINALLY THE COMPANY HAD HOPED TO USE THE MODERNIZATION OF ITS FLEET AS PRETEXT FOR GETTING RID OF THE MORE TROUBLESOME ELEMENTS OF THE SEAMEN'S UNIONS, THIS RESOLVE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DROPPED.

5. THE SEAMEN ARE EXPECTED TO RESUME WORK UPON SIGNING OF THE NEW 1978 COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT. THROUGHOUT THE PROLONGED STRIKE, THE UNION LEADERS, WHO ARE PREDOMINANTLY HERUT, REPEATEDLY SOUGHT TO ENLIST VARIOUS HERUT PERSONALITIES FOR OBTAINING A MORE FAVORABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE STRIKE. EVEN PRIME MINISTER BEGIN REPORTEDLY PROMISED TO APPROACH THE MANAGEMENT AND MINISTER AMIT ON THEIR BEHALF. HOWEVER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ISRAEL SHIP-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PING ASSOCIATION, FORMER REAR ADMIRAL SHLOMO HERELL, HIMSELF A VETERAN HERUT LEADER, REJECTED ALL SUCH INTERVENTION.

6. COMMENT: THE HISTADRUT REPRESENTATIVE ON THE ZIM BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADMITTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND MANAGEMENT HAD WON A VICTORY, BUT ADDED THAT IT HAD BEEN BOUGHT WITH COSTLY CONCESSIONS IN OTHER AREAS, ESPECIALLY THE RE-EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE AND CONSIDERABLE WAGE INCREASES. MOREOVER, THERE IS SOME SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SEAMEN CAN BE MADE TO ABIDE BY THE NO-STRIKE AGREEMENT SINCE OLD BAD HABITS DIE HARD. LEWIS

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